

Testimony Supporting

S.B. 284 “An Act Increasing the Age from Eight to Eighteen Years For An Income-Eligible Person to Obtain Medical Assistance Regardless Of Immigration Status”

March 8th, 2022

Dear Members of the Human Services Committee of Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is Caroline Tanbee Smith, and I am a resident of the City of New Haven.

I am writing in support of **S.B. 284: An Act Increasing the Age from Eight to Eighteen Years For An Income-Eligible Person to Obtain Medical Assistance Regardless Of Immigration Status**. After two years of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is abundantly clear that we need to rise and provide deep, significant support for Connecticut’s young people — especially our most vulnerable youth. Passing this bill would be an important step to make sure Connecticut’s immigrant community and youth are included in this promise and priority.

As we move forward, I would urge the committee to work towards opening access to healthcare to all community members in Connecticut regardless of age or immigration status, including parents and adults. Data paints a clear picture of the need that exists and responsibility we have to act:

- **Need for insurance:** 30.1% of foreign-born, non-citizens in Connecticut have no healthcare coverage — which is almost 159,600 individuals (Migrant Policy Institute). 52% of the undocumented community are uninsured — which is almost 53,000 individuals.
- **Right to insurance:** Undocumented immigrants pay roughly \$145 million dollars in state and local taxes and 253 million in federal taxes annually — including into medicare and social security (New American Economy). And, yet, they cannot access comprehensive healthcare coverage themselves.

Healthcare is a basic, public essential. Having access to healthcare not only can provide safety and stability, but also builds the foundation for individuals and families to dream, innovate, and provide for their communities. For my day job, I work for an organization that supports underrepresented entrepreneurs. It is clear every single day the role that basic, essential needs — such as housing, healthcare, childcare, and food — have in an entrepreneur’s ability to build a business that can sustain themselves, create local jobs, and build wealth for the neighborhood. Providing a foundation of these supports are essential to an inclusive, locally-driven innovation and entrepreneurship economy.

For these reasons and more, I support S.B. 284 and I ask the committee to support and pass this legislation. Thank you for reading and for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Caroline Tanbee Smith